

The Residential Extension Guide

Your planning route, the real limits, and the mistakes that get extensions refused.

Editable Word version and our other guides: exparc.co.uk/free-guides

In this guide: your approval routes, what trips people up, what it costs, how long it takes, a checklist you can work through, and answers to the questions we are asked most.

1. Your approval routes

Route	When it applies	What you submit
Permitted Development	Many single-storey rear extensions within depth, height and boundary limits	Nothing, though a lawful development certificate is strongly advised
Prior Approval	Larger single-storey rear extensions (up to 6m or 8m)	Notification, drawings, neighbour consultation
Full Planning	Two-storey, side, front, or anything in a conservation area	Full application with drawings and plans

2. What trips people up

- Earlier extensions eat your allowance. Permitted development is measured against the original house, not the house you bought.
- Depth limits differ by house type: roughly 3m detached versus 4m for others under standard rights, and 6m or 8m through prior approval.
- Planning permission and Building Regulations are separate approvals. Getting one does not give you the other.
- Percentage fees move with your build cost. A fixed written price is the only way to know your number up front.

3. What it costs

Typical UK market ranges, so you can sanity-check any quote you receive. Exp|Arc quotes one fixed written price after a free route check, and flags the third-party costs below up front.

What	Typical UK range	Who it is paid to
Planning drawings	£1,200 – £2,500	Your drawing practice
Full set incl. Building Regs	£2,500 – £5,000	Your drawing practice
Council application fee	£548 (householder, England, from April 2026)	Local authority
Structural engineer	£700 – £2,000	Engineer, where structure changes
Measured survey	Up to £450, or £0 with a guided self-survey	Surveyor

4. How long it takes

Stage	Typical time
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Free planning-route check	Same working day
First draft drawings	10 working days
Revisions until you are happy	Unlimited, usually 1 to 2 rounds
Council decision	6 to 8 weeks from validation
Building Regulations set	1 to 2 weeks after approval

5. Your checklist

- ☐ Confirm your route in writing before designing
- ☐ Check what earlier extensions have used up
- ☐ Measure boundary distances and ridge heights
- ☐ Budget for the council fee and a structural engineer
- ☐ Commission accurate existing drawings
- ☐ Consider the Party Wall Act if building near a shared wall
- ☐ Allow 6 to 8 weeks for a decision

6. Questions people ask

Will a rear extension need planning permission?

Often not. Many single-storey rear extensions sit within permitted development, and larger ones can go through prior approval. The only reliable answer is a check against your specific property and its history.

What drawings will I actually receive?

Existing and proposed floor plans, elevations and sections, a site location plan and a block plan, plus a Building Regulations set where the work is structural.

What happens if the council refuses it?

We handle the changes and the resubmission. If any application we submit is refused, you get a 100% refund within 5 days.

Get your free planning-route check

Send your postcode and what you are planning. You get the route confirmed in writing, the drawings you need, and one fixed price, usually the same working day. If any application we submit is refused, you get a 100% refund within 5 days.

exparc.co.uk/get-a-quote · info@exparc.co.uk · +44 7883 283289

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